

DAVE FORMAN vividly remembers the moment he first saw the woman who was to become his wife.

He was sitting on a tin can in the fading shadows of a West African sunset, dressed as a hairy ape.

Tina, the woman who caught his eye, was in a petite chimp's costume — scurrying across the jungle floor on all fours.

"The second I saw that cute little bottom," Forman says, his dark eyes full of mischief, "I knew that was the girl for me."

Dave and Tina are a most unusual love story.

But, then, they are most unusual people working in a little publicised showbusiness speciality called "costume work".

Dave and Tina are part actors, part stunt people and all animal.

They dress up in creature suits, masquerading as animals in the wild, when the real thing can't do what the producers want.

The picture on which Dave and Tina met was Greystoke: The Legend Of Tarzan.

"Tina played a chimp called Blush and I was a dominant male ape. How could I resist her?" Forman says, his face beaming.

There were other successes after Greystoke. In the recent international hit The Bear, chameleon-like Forman played the huge mother grizzly killed by a rockslide in the film's opening moments.

He was a baby polar bear for a German TV series and a trendy feline in the musical Cats.

But the crowning achievement to his gimmick-filled career is now in movie theatres everywhere.

Dave Forman, whose face you

● Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles has made a star — whose face the public will never see — of Dave Forman, who plays Leonardo in the hit movie.

never see, is one of the men behind those lovable masks in the film Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, breaking all box-office records.

Dave is Leonardo, one of four Ninja Turtles who started life, so the story goes, as pet turtles.

They were dropped in a sewer, flushed away and unwanted. But then fate stepped in — they were mutated by atomic waste.

They became life-sized, with teen-like characteristics. They love pizza and talk hip.

And they learned martial arts from another mutant, a Ninja-trained rat named Splinter.

"Without question, Ninja Turtles was my most difficult character," Forman says.

"Along with my Turtle co-stars, I spent 12 hours a day in a form-fitted latex suit that couldn't 'breathe' and weighed 70 pounds (32kg).

"Plus, this world of animatronics is brand new. And though the Jim Henson organisation is way ahead in the new technology, there were inevitable bugs and breakdowns we had to iron out as we went along."

While viewers never see the man behind the Leonardo turtle skin, that doesn't bother Dave.

"I quite like the anonymity of it all," he says. "I think it would be a terrible thing to have people in your face wherever you go, preventing you from a normal life with normal pleasures."

Raised in London by an Irish father and Malaysian mother, Forman represented Britain in gymnastics at the 1980 World Games.

"A few years later," he recalls, "a friend of mine introduced me to Rick Baker, the make-up whiz who was looking for people to play apes in Greystoke."

"I was uniquely qualified for

If little Jack Forman is slightly confused about his parents, it's no wonder!

'POPPA WAS A NINJA TURTLE, MAMA WAS A

'costume work'. I was the right size (165cm, 65kg), in excellent shape and had acrobatic ability. Greystoke was my first film, the one that started everything off."

Tina travelled a different road.

"I trained as a children's nurse," she says. "I did that for 10 years. I was strictly nine-to-five, though I did manage to do a bit of children's theatre along the way."

"In the evenings, I was also teaching at a local health club. When I heard about Greystoke I jumped at the chance. And after that, I was called on for more and more of that kind of thing."





CHIMP...!

• Dave "Ninja Turtle" Foreman with wife Tina and son Jack. At right is Splinter, who gave the Turtles their martial arts skills.

Because of her size, (157cm, 50kg), Tina gets a lot of stunt work. "I play little old ladies or young children," she says. "Last week I took a fall off a bridge; the week before, I was squashed by a car."

Dave and Tina teamed up recently for their latest production, six-month-old Jack.

"Our dream is to open a nursery and day-care centre," says Tina. "We'd like to build one big enough to care for about 26 children."

"For now, though, Jack fits in nicely with what I'm doing in my career. I take him everywhere. A woman should be able to take her

children with her to work."

So, will the children ("Dave would like at least five," says Tina) be following in their parents' footsteps?

"Jack has turned down his first film," Dave says proudly. "Some casting people were looking for a baby for a BBC production. Tina and I decided that, for now, two actors in the family are enough."

"Besides, they were going to show his face!"

Story and pictures:
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